

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

The Board of the Washington Fire Commissioners Association held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 19, 2010 at the state association office in Olympia, Washington.

Members present: President Robert Skaggs, Vice President Sharon Colby, Secretary-Treasurer Miland Walling, Region 1 Alternate Jim Lahde, Region 2 Alternate Brad Langdell, Region 3 Director Dwight Vander Vorste, Region 5 Director Steve Lich, Region 6 Director Jim Farrell, Region 7 Director Jerry Strong, Region 8 Director Keith Merritt and Region 9 Director Steve Neupert.

Also present: Jack Hensley (Spokane 4), Mick McKinley (Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue), Dick Spring (Clark 6), Ryan Spiller (Capitol Connection), Roger Ferris, Sandy Babcock, Jim Lux and Nora Eylenfeldt (WFCA).

President Skaggs called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. and following introductions, called for approval of the agenda. Keith Merritt moved and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion carried.**

Steve Lich moved and it was seconded to approve the December 5, 2009 Board meeting minutes as submitted. **Motion carried.**

Miland Walling gave the Secretary-Treasurer's report reviewing finances, noting the association ended 2009 under budget. President Skaggs accepted the financial report.

Jack Hensley presented the Health Care Committee report outlining the process used for screening and interviewing candidates for committee vacancies. Based on the committee's recommendation, Jim Farrell moved and it was seconded to appoint Jerry Bragg (Chelan 5) and Brad Langdell (Walla Walla 5) as members of the Health Care Committee. **Motion carried.** It was noted all parties involved in the interview process will receive notification of the Board's action.

Jack Hensley stated the Health Care Committee recommends the Board adopt a policy regarding the handling of proprietary information. Jim Farrell moved and it was seconded to adopt this policy. Dwight Vander Vorste asked how a Board or committee member would know what is and is not proprietary information. Jim Lux responded that TPSC and Mercer sometimes provide such information and they would be in a position to advise what falls under this category. Mr. Lux noted that TPSC, Mercer and the State Risk Manager have approved this policy. **Motion carried.**

Steve Lich moved and it was seconded to approve December 2009 disbursements, checks 22768 through 22827, in the amount of \$65,887.59. **Motion carried.**

Jim Lux gave the Health Care Manager's report noting the program experienced a \$1.1 million loss in 2009 as a result of medical expenses exceeding premium income. This was due in large part to a high number of large claims (\$50,000-plus). In spite of the bad year, the fund balance remains well above what is required by the State Risk Manager. Mr. Lux announced that 10 districts left the program, resulting in a 25% drop in enrollment. Administrative guides are being finalized and will be distributed to districts within the next few weeks.

Roger Ferris gave the Investment Officer's report referring to the financial sheet provided the Board.

President Skaggs accepted the Health Care reports.

Roger Ferris presented the Executive Secretary's report stating correspondence was received from Raymond Bunk, a fire commissioner from Pierce County who is running for state representative in the 31st legislative district. Mr. Bunk has requested the WFC's endorsement; Mr. Ferris noted that as a public agency, the WFC cannot endorse candidates and ballot measures, although individuals are free to do so.

Roger Ferris stated the association received correspondence from Chief Mike Ganz, Camano Island Fire & Rescue, concerning a volunteer in his district who also serves as a paid firefighter for another entity. The firefighter was pressured to quit as a volunteer. Discussion followed. It was the consensus of the Board that Mr. Ferris draft a boiler plate letter to be used by districts that face this issue.

President Skaggs stated his district has guidelines for fire commissioner uniforms. Discussion followed. It was the consensus of the Board that President Skaggs provide the guidelines and information to the state office for inclusion in *Fireline*.

President Skaggs asked staff to look into implementing a recognition plaque for outgoing WFC Board members.

Roger Ferris presented several pieces of correspondence related to the formation of the Washington Fire Chiefs' (WFC) health care program and then-Region 9 Director Mick McKinley's September 23, 2009 email to Bill Gates. On November 20, 2009, Mick McKinley was sent a letter from the WFC Ad Hoc Committee (formed by the WFC Board to take "an unbiased approach to investigating the background of this issue") requesting Commissioner McKinley's appearance before the committee to address relevant facts pertaining to the matter. Commissioner McKinley met with the Ad Hoc Committee on December 4 during which he made a brief statement and asked to present evidence. The committee stated it was unnecessary for him to continue, noting this was an internal issue for the Washington Fire Commissioners Association and as far as the committee was concerned, the matter was over. (At Commissioner McKinley's request, President Bob Skaggs and Roger Ferris were in attendance at this meeting.)

On December 17, 2009, Mick McKinley, Bob Skaggs and Roger Ferris received a letter from WFC Executive Director Mike Brown stating the committee's interviews and information revealed the following:

- "1. Your accusations against Commissioner Gates were in your capacity as a fire commissioner and were an internal matter between and within the Fire Commissioners organization.*
- 2. Your accusations against Commissioner Gates via email included alleged unethical motivations by the WFC's president in his capacities both as president and as fire chief of South Kitsap Fire & Rescue.*
- 3. Your comments reflected negatively upon the WFC and exacerbated an already strained relationship between the WFC and the Washington Fire Commissioners Association (WFC).*
- 4. Your correspondence with Commissioner Gates, copied to other fire commissioners, was intended to be an internal matter, but was widely distributed. While that process may be standard practice amongst the Commissioners Executive Board, the email lacked any confidentiality. As a result, the fire chiefs who were subjects of your allegations saw the email, which resulted in a flurry of activity that impacted the professional relationship between the two organizations.*

5. The relationship between yourself and Chief Senter is severely strained, does not have a foundation of trust, and escalated to eventually create strain and tension between our respective associations.”

Mick McKinley, Bob Skaggs and Roger Ferris stated they were in full agreement with Item #1, but were surprised at Items #2 - #5. During the December 4 meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee made no mention of the issues referred to in Items #2 - #5 and neither requested nor allowed evidence from Commissioner McKinley regarding these issues. In a conversation with Roger Ferris in early January, Mike Brown conceded that he and the WFC Board had made “slight edits” to the Ad Hoc Committee’s report. President Skaggs stated he expressed his displeasure to Ad Hoc Committee Chair Don Bivins regarding this report, as he believed an agreement had been reached that this was a WFC issue. President Skaggs stated emphatically that he is committed to working with the WFC but he is also committed to the WFC.

Following discussion, Sharon Colby moved and it was seconded to direct Roger Ferris and President Skaggs to write a letter on the Board’s behalf to the Washington Fire Chiefs’ Board expressing the WFC’s concerns about this issue. **Motion carried.** Roger Ferris noted the draft will be distributed to the Board for comment prior to being sent to the WFC.

President Skaggs accepted the Executive Secretary’s report.

The board recessed at 4:20 p.m. The Board reconvened at 4:30 p.m.

Sharon Colby gave the Executive Committee report stating 10 performance evaluations were completed for the Executive Secretary. Seven goals were established for 2010, as follows: 1) to increase revenue and improve efficiencies; 2) monitor and balance the budget; 3) commence indexing of educational handouts for membership access; 4) vigorously advocate for legislative priorities as recommended by the WFC Legislative Committee; 5) coordinate letters to local officials regarding residential fire sprinklers; 6) look for benefits for volunteer firefighters; 7) monitor all retirement programs for compromises caused by state budget shortfalls. Based on the high scores Mr. Ferris received on his evaluations, the Executive Committee concluded that he is doing an excellent job for the association. The Board gave Mr. Ferris a round of applause. President Skaggs accepted the Executive Committee report.

Ryan Spiller gave the legislative report reviewing priorities and announcing two new ones: 1) no man’s land legislation, and 2) Governor’s request legislation to merge the Board for Volunteer Firefighters (BVFF) into the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS). Discussion followed. Keith Merritt moved and it was seconded to oppose the merger of BVFF into DRS. **Motion carried unanimously with Miland Walling abstaining.** President Skaggs accepted the legislative report.

President Skaggs announced the Fire Protection Policy Board representative did not provide a report for this meeting.

Keith Merritt presented one of the founding documents of the Fire Service Leadership Forum stating the group is celebrating its 10th anniversary. The Forum has been discussing its future, which includes a desire to take on a greater level of responsibility, particularly in light of the possible disbanding of the Fire Protection Policy Board. President Skaggs accepted the Forum report.

Steve Lich gave the E911 Committee report noting there will be a meeting later this week. Ryan Spiller requested a contact name for the lead on the bill supporting Next Generation 911 Funding. Steve Lich

moved and it was seconded to appoint Mick McKinley as alternate to the E-911 Committee. **Motion carried.** President Skaggs accepted the E-911 Committee report.

Roger Ferris presented the James R. Larson Forum Building report stating the restroom renovation is almost complete. The association received a capital return of \$63,650 in 2009. President Skaggs accepted the Forum Building report.

Dick Spring asked about reorganizing the categories for the Management Excellence Award Program. Steve Lich responded there will be an article in *Fireline* requesting input on this; preliminary suggestions include one category for \$10 million-plus, one for \$1 million - \$10 million, and two for districts with assessed values under \$1 million.

Miland Walling moved and it was seconded to appoint the following commissioners to the WFCB Budget Committee: Bill Anderson (Spokane Valley Fire Department), Dave Fergus (Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue), Greg Hesse (Spokane 8) and Keith Merritt (Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue). **Motion carried.**

Roger Ferris referred to a proposal provided the Board for a WFCB office renovation. This remodel would provide appropriate office space for the Health Care Manager and reconfigure existing space to add storage in the workroom. It was noted part of the renovation would be paid by IRSRA and part by the WFCB; no loans will be secured. Brad Langdell moved and it was seconded to accept the bid of \$17,557 and proceed with the WFCB office remodel. **Motion carried.**

President Skaggs brought up the issue of insurance companies giving a rating of 10 to homes located beyond a five-mile radius of a fire station, regardless of the fire district's rating. President Skaggs stated a homeowner in his fire district was rated a 10 because her home is 1/10 of a mile outside the five-mile radius; as a result, her insurance premium tripled. Discussion followed. Jerry Strong moved and it was seconded that Roger Ferris investigate this issue and report back to the Board. **Motion carried.**

Regional directors reported on activities within their respective regions.

It was suggested that staff print business cards for the Board; staff will provide a form for Board members to complete in order to customize the cards.

Steve Lich announced the IRS mileage rate has changed to 50 cents per mile effective January 2010 and requested this information be posted on the WFCB website.

President Skaggs announced the next WFCB Board meeting will be held Friday, April 30 at the Holiday Inn in Yakima. This is the day before the WFCB Legislative Roundtable.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.